

# Open Letter Of An Imprisoned Yellow Vest

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Comité de Soutien à Thomas P.  
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not want to talk from a position of ignorance. But very quickly, I decided to leave college. The observation was simple, not only did we learn much more in the books than in class, but in addition to that I did not want to raise myself socially in order to become a little easy frame of the system that I wanted to fight against. This was the real beginning of the adventure.

Then I lived with many friends in towns or in the country, that's where I learned to fix everything, to build everything. We tried to do everything ourselves rather than work to buy it. A bit of a hippie life! The difference was that we knew we were not going to change the world by burying ourselves in our self-sufficient little cocoon. So, I always kept in touch with the political news, I went to meet those who, like me in the past, lived their first movement.

That's how I joined the Yellow Vests for four months now. It's the most beautiful and strongest movement I've ever seen. I threw my body and soul at it, without hesitation. The afternoon of my arrest, many people came to me to greet me, thank me or tell me to take care of myself. The acts that I am reproached for, those I have committed and the others, they are in reality collective. And that's precisely what the government is afraid of, and that's why they repress us and lock us up individually, trying to pit us against each other. The kind citizen against the bad 'breaker'. But obviously, neither the truncheon nor prison seem to stop this movement. I am wholeheartedly with those who continue.

*On 29/04/2019, from inside the walls of Fleury-Merogis,  
Thomas, Yellow Vest.*

1. This is also true of many official environmentalists who wish that this poor, polluting man could no longer drive his 1990's van, which he maintains, repairs, and cultivates himself. No, he's gonna have to buy the latest low-consumption high-tech every four years.

2. Moreover, the newspapers talk about my criminal record for 'degradation'. I had to dig in my head to remember. It is more precisely a 'robbery with an organised gang'. I.e., that by stepping over a fence to recuperate food in the bins of a rural Carrefour Market, he stooped low. This isn't a joke. This is just the magic of criminal qualifications.

Hello,

My name is Thomas. I'm one of those many Yellow Vests that are sleeping in jail right now. It has been almost 3 months since I was incarcerated in Fleury-Mérogis under a criminal arrest warrant.

I am accused of a lot of things after my participation in Act 13 in Paris:

- *'degradation or deterioration of property belonging to others'*
- *'degradation or deterioration of property belonging to someone else by means dangerous to people' (fire of a Porsche)*
- *'degradation or deterioration of property by means dangerous to persons committed because of the owner's status of a person who holds public authority' (Ministry of the Armed Forces)*
- *'degradation or deterioration of property intended for public utility or decoration' (attack on a police car and a car of the penitentiary administration)*
- *'violence aggravated by two circumstances (with a weapon and against a depository of public authority) followed by incapacity not exceeding 8 days' (the weapon would be a barrier of a building site, still on the same police car, 2 days of temporary incapacity for work for trauma)*
- *'violence against a person holding public authority without incapacity'*
- *'participation in a group formed for the preparation of violence against persons or the destruction or degradation of property'*

I have indeed committed some acts that are covered by these rather high-flown formulations ... And I assume them. I am well aware that writing this may make me stay a little longer in prison and I understand very well all those who prefer not to admit their actions in front of the courts and bet on possible clemency.

When one reads this long list of crimes and their titles, there is enough to make me look like a madman, right? This is how I was described in the media. In the end, I was reduced to a very practical word: 'breaker' [*"casqueur"* in French – ed]. Simply. 'Why did this guy break things? – Because he's a breaker, it's obvious'. Everything is said, move along there is nothing to see and above all, nothing to understand. It's as if some are born to be a 'breaker'. This avoids having to ask why one trade is targeted over another, and if by chance these acts would not make sense, at least for those who risk doing so.

It is also quite ironic that I find myself wearing the label of 'breaker', especially because the thing I enjoy most in life is construction. Joinery, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electricity, welding ... Tinkering, repairing everything that needs to be repaired, building a house from the foundations up, that's my thing. Anyway, it's true, nothing I've built or repaired looks like a bank or a police car.

In some media I have also been called a 'brute', yet I have never been a violent person. One could even say that I am soft. So much so that it made my life complicated during adolescence. Of course, in life, we all go through difficult situations and we harden ourselves. Anyway, I am not trying to say that I am a lamb or a victim.

One is no longer innocent when one has seen 'legitimate' violence, legal violence: that of the police. I saw the hatred or emptiness in their eyes and I heard their chilling warnings: 'disperse, go home'. I saw the charges, grenades, and beatings in general. I saw the checks, searches, traps, arrests, and jail. I saw people falling, blood, I saw the mutilated. Like all those who were demonstrating this February 9th, I learned that once again a man had just had his hand ripped off by a grenade. And then I did not see anything anymore, because of the gas. All of us were suffocating. That's when I decided not to be a victim anymore and to fight. I'm proud of it. Proud to have raised my head, proud not to have given in to fear.

Of course, like all those who are targeted by the repression against the Yellow Vests movement, I first protested peacefully and daily, I always solved problems with words rather than with fists. But I am convinced that in some situations conflict is needed. Because debate, however 'big' it may be, can sometimes be rigged or distorted. All that is needed is for the organiser to ask the questions in a way that suits them. We are told on one side that the state coffers are empty, but we are bailing out the banks with millions when they are in trouble, we are talking about an 'ecological transition' without ever calling into question the production system and consumption at the origin of all climatic

disturbances.<sup>1</sup> We are millions who shout at them, saying that their system is rotten, and they are telling us how they are trying to save it.

In fact, everything is about correctness. There is a just usage of gentleness, a fair usage of speech, and a fair usage of violence.

We must take matters into our own hands and stop imploring governments so determined to lead us into a wall. We need a bit of seriousness, a bit of honour, and to recognise that a number of systems, organisations, and businesses are destroying our lives as much as our environment, and that we will have to one day make them powerless to do harm. It implies to act, it implies gestures, it implies choices: wild protest or law enforcement?

In this regard, I hear a lot of stupidity on TV, but there is one that seems particularly vulgar to me. No, no protesters are trying to 'kill cops'. The challenge of street clashes is to manage to push back the police, to keep them in line: to get out of a trap, to reach a place of power, or to simply take the street. Since November 17th those who have threatened to fire their weapons, those who brutalise, mutilate, and suffocate unarmed and defenceless protesters, those who are not the so-called 'breakers', they are the police. If the media does not talk about it, the hundreds of thousands of people who have been at the roundabouts and in the streets know it. Behind their brutality and threats, it is fear that is hiding. And when that moment comes, in general, it means that the revolution is not far away.

If I have never wanted to see my name in the press, it is now the case, and as I expect journalists and magistrates to dig into and expose my personal life, I might as well take the floor myself.<sup>2</sup> So here's my little story. After a rather banal childhood in a small town in Poitou, I went to the 'big city' next door to start school, leave the family home (although I really like my parents), and started an active life. Not for the purpose of finding work and taking out loans, no, rather to travel, to have new experiences, to find love, to live crazy things, to have adventures. Those who do not dream of this at 17 must be seriously disturbed.

This possibility, for me, was college, but I quickly disappointed in the face of boredom and reigning apathy. Then, luckily, I came across a general assembly at the beginning of the retiree movement. There were people who wanted to block the college and who caught my attention. I met a few who wanted to occupy a building and join the dockers. The next day, I accompanied them to brick off the local *Medef* and tag 'power to the people' on the fresh blocks. That's the day the man I am today was born.

So I studied history because we talked a lot about revolution and I did